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RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHTO #0802/01 2011149
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 201149Z JUL 09
FM AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0531
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0445
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MAPUTO 000802

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/20/2019
TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MZ](#)
SUBJECT: SENIOR FRELIMO OFFICIAL ON THE PARTY'S FUTURE
STRATEGY

REF: A. A. MAPUTO 725
[1](#)B. B. 08 MAPUTO 791

Classified By: Pol/Econ Chief Matthew Roth, Reasons 1.4(b+d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Poloffs met on July 10 with Dr. Xarzada Ora, a senior FRELIMO leader, and the party's Secretary of the Central Committee for External Relations. She explained FRELIMO's history, party structure, and some of the party's strategy for the future, describing a dominant party that controls all Government of Mozambique (GRM) decisions and that is ultimately responsible for GRM successes--even taking credit for projects that are ostensibly of the state. At the same time Ora claimed FRELIMO and the GRM are highly democratic because the internal party structure relies on a series of elections. FRELIMO's conflation with the state is worrisome, and despite the claim to the contrary, the current situation does not reflect a key benchmark for democracy*the open competition for votes by multiple parties. End Summary.

FRELIMO's Electoral History

[1](#)2. (C) Ora began the discussions with an overview of FRELIMO's past performance in elections. Mozambique's first multi-party election was held in 1994 following single-party rule since independence from Portugal in 1975. Of 250 seats available in the parliamentary elections, FRELIMO took 129 in that first election. In 1999, FRELIMO increased its total in the National Assembly to 133, and in 2004 took 160 seats. Ora predicts that FRELIMO is positioned to do well this year, and will be able to hold a larger majority. She attributes FRELIMO's increasing electoral success to the Party's efforts to cater to the needs of the Mozambican people, including tangible projects, such as rural development schemes (Ref B) and promoting access to water, electricity, and telephones. Ora also noted that FRELIMO has pushed the Government of Mozambique (GRM) to engage in significant infrastructure projects. For example, Ora confirmed that FRELIMO is scheduled to hold an opening ceremony for a 78 million euro bridge over the Zambezi river, funded by the EU, Sweden, Italy, and Japan, that will provide the final missing link on the EN-1, the country's national north-south highway, directly connecting Sofala and Zambezia province. Ora predicts that this and other large-scale infrastructure projects will encourage voters to select FRELIMO on election day.

FRELIMO's Organizational Structure

[1](#)3. (C) FRELIMO just finished its internal elections in preparation for the upcoming election. The party follows a

Soviet-style system of having a series of increasingly larger groups of members, from the micro local-level cell all the way up to national representatives. Ora describes this system as democratic because each level votes on a member to represent it at the next highest level; she criticized other parties, particularly Renamo, for being undemocratic in that they draft lists of nominees for its representatives in the National Assembly. In FRELIMO, the smallest party level is a 15 person cell. Cells nominate representatives to the next larger 20-30 person circles, who in turn nominate representatives to the 30-40 member zones, 40-50 member districts, and finally to the 70-80 person committees at the provincial level. These members then hold a secret vote to determine who will represent FRELIMO in the National Assembly. Ora called this system "proof" that FRELIMO, though politically dominant, is practicing internal democracy.

The Importance of Women in the Party

¶4. (C) Ora identified FRELIMO's commitment to women as a primary key to its success and said it was important for females to enter political work. Beginning at independence, Ora said, FRELIMO worked to repair the destroyed education sector and focused on allowing all children to attend, with a special attention to getting Muslim girls along the coastline to enroll. Ora mentioned that women hold leadership roles within the GRM and FRELIMO, including herself. Today, seven ministries are headed by women (the Prime Minister, Justice, Labor, Women & Social Issues, Environment, Mineral Resources, and Parliamentary Affairs) and 3 of 8 Secretaries in the FRELIMO Central Committee are women (Training, Parliamentary Affairs, and External Relations).

The Importance of the Party in the GRM

¶5. (C) According to Ora, GRM policy decisions are highly centralized and made within the FRELIMO party headquarters. The process is opaque and purposely kept secret, but Ora implied that policy is made by the central committee, and implemented by government ministers. Within the party itself, decisions are largely top-down, and underperformers at local levels are removed. Ora bragged that she could call the Minister of Foreign Affairs and tell him to tow the party line should his statements contradict FRELIMO policy decisions. Ora explained that she gave this example in order to show that FRELIMO was in complete control over decisions made by the GRM, as it was the party that controlled the state, and not the other way around.

FRELIMO's Strategy for Future Success

¶6. (C) According to Ora, FRELIMO believes most Mozambican people are satisfied with its role in government because of success in improving hospitals, schools and infrastructure. She said FRELIMO aims to be the party for all Mozambicans, including people from all races, religions, genders, ages and regions. When asked specifically how the party was working to attract the younger generation, many of whom were born after independence, Ora stressed the importance of education. She said FRELIMO runs an education center in Matola that brings youth from all provinces together for classes about FRELIMO's history, party values, and core leadership tenets; the students are also given pocket-sized books about Eduardo Mondlane, Samora Machel and other important historical FRELIMO figures. Youth trained at the Matola center are encouraged to return to the provinces and train their cohorts. Ora also pointed out that even senior members of FRELIMO return to the Matola school for occasional re-education. Ora claims that because it brings in young people for heavy doctrinal FRELIMO training, the party "is immortal," and is constantly grooming the next generation of

leadership.

'Open Presidency' and the 7 Million Meticaïs Fund

¶7. (C) FRELIMO is working to provide a visible presence across the country, according to Ora. She said President Guebuza's "Open Presidency" creates the appearance of an accessible administration, and this month he will complete his four-year mission of visiting all 128 districts, a popular move because voters feel they have a direct line of communication to the President. (Note: The program is expensive; this year Guebuza again increased visibility by traveling with a fleet of six helicopters, even to districts easily accessible by car from the capital. FRELIMO slogans and party presence is overwhelming at these state-funded events. End Note). Ora also pointed to a GRM program popularly called the "Seven Million Fund", where each district is eligible for a 7 million meticaïs (about \$280,000) grant (Ref B) to fund grassroots development projects. Ora claims the funds are used for local infrastructure and other projects, and generate significant community participation and oversight of the funds, though opposition candidates complain that only FRELIMO members are beneficiaries. (Note: While originally billed as low-interest loans, the repayment rate for the fund so far is less than one percent. End note.) Turning to the future, Ora said that FRELIMO plans to place at least one doctor in each of the 128 districts, and improve roads and hospitals.

COMMENT: Internal Party Vote Isn't Democracy

¶8. (C) Ora was an eloquent and surprisingly open interlocutor in this meeting, and left poloffs with the sense FRELIMO is a tightly run organization. Her conflation of state and FRELIMO is not uncommon in Mozambique. Nonetheless, it is somewhat off-putting how the party so brazenly takes credit for donor-funded projects such as the Armando Guebuza Bridge over the Zambezi River, or the 7 million meticaïs rural development program. Nonetheless, Ora gave concrete and specific examples of where the party has succeeded, and how the party can move forward with development projects. This is in sharp contrast to our meetings with opposition leaders from RENAMO and PIMO, who speak only in generalities and were incapable of articulating what policy changes their parties would make once in office (septels). While her argument that FRELIMO shows strong democratic values by holding frequent party elections is interesting, it misses the point that competitive, multi-party elections are an important benchmark for democracy. The strong and centralized FRELIMO continues to dominate Mozambican politics, and is using all advantages of the incumbency, including donor-funded programs, to consolidate power and ensure its success in the next election (Ref A). The unwritten requirement that government bureaucrats be registered FRELIMO members and vote on election day to be eligible for promotion, the use of government resources for party activities, and the muzzling of media lead Post to conclude that FRELIMO remains far off from wishing to see free and fair multiparty elections on a level playing field in Mozambique.

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